

## Special Master on Claim Bills

### **CS/SB 12 — Relief of Ricardo Medrano-Arzate and Eva Chavez-Medrano as personal representatives of Hilda Medrano/Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office**

by Judiciary Committee and Senator Polsky

The bill awards \$1,200,000 to Ricardo Medrano-Arzate and Eva Chavez-Medrano, the parents of Hilda Medrano. Ms. Medrano was killed on December 1, 2013, by the negligence of an Okeechobee County Sheriff's deputy who was driving at speeds in excess of 90 miles per hour in an area that had a 35 miles per hour speed limit. At the time of the accident the deputy was not operating his vehicle with any emergency lights or sirens.

When the case was tried in 2018, the jury awarded \$5,000,000 in damages to the estate of Hilda Medrano. The jury determined that the deputy was 88.5 percent at fault and the driver of the car in which Ms. Medrano was a passenger was 11.5 percent at fault. The judge issued a final judgment for \$4,425,000, in favor of Ms. Medrano's estate, the proportion of the total verdict attributed to the negligence of the Sheriff's Office.

The Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office has already paid \$500,000, the total coverage provided by the Florida Sheriff's Risk Management Fund, to the family of the driver who was killed in the accident and to a passenger who was injured while riding in the rear seat of the car.

During this legislative session, the attorneys for the claimant and respondent reached an agreement to settle this claim for \$1,200,000. The first \$300,000 will be paid within 30 days of the bill becoming law. The three remaining payments will be paid by July 1 of each of the following years.

The total amount of attorney fees paid for this claim may not exceed \$240,000; the total amount paid for lobbying fees may not exceed \$60,000; and the total amount paid for costs of other similar expenses may not exceed \$4,945.49.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect upon becoming law.

*Vote: Senate 38-1; House 105-0*